"CHOICES"

A THREE YEAR ACTION PLAN TO ADDRESS SPOUSAL ASSAULT 1986-89

FINAL REPORT ON PROGRESS TO MARCH 31, 1989

OCTOBER 1989

Northwest Territories Minister Responsible for Status of Women

Tabled in the Legislative Assembly October 27, 1989

Minister's Message

On behalf of the Ministerial Committee on Spousal Assault I am pleased to submit the Third and Final Report in accordance with the direction given in **'CHOICES - A THREE YEAR ACTION PLAN TO ADDRESS SPOUSAL ASSAULT'.**

This Final Report contains a synopsis of progress made on all items over the three year life of the Action Plan. It builds on the first and second progress reports. A summary of questions being addressed by current research in the field and a reading list are also included.

The Ministerial Committee, chaired by the Women's Secretariat, has had the mandate to facilitate and monitor the implementation of **"Choices".** With the publication of this Report, the Ministerial Committee has completed its mandate.

Many initiatives have seen a great deal of progress and achievement over the life of **"Choices".** Highlights include:

- Production and distribution of written and video resources including the "Spousal Assault Network" newsletter.
- Development and funding of eight shelters, and two counselling services which serve batterers, victims and families, by the Family Violence Prevention Program in the Department of Social Services.
- Development and implementation of the School Health Curriculum including units on Family Life and Alcohol and Drug Awareness.
- Opening of a second-stage housing unit.
- Delivery and funding of training sessions and workshops for community groups, teachers, nurses, social workers, students, and the general public.

- Development of departmental and inter-departmental procedures and referral protocols to improve handling of spousal assault cases.

We have also begun to address emerging issues and needs such as child sexual abuse, second stage housing, victims' advocacy services and the special needs of children of violent homes. Outreach to and communication with non-governmental community agencies has also been recognized as key to tackling the issues of violence within our homes and communities.

The Women's Secretariat will continue to monitor and facilitate departmental initiatives and to promote inter-agency cooperation. While progress has been made, continued provision of support and encouragement to departments and to community organizations working in the "front lines" is crucial. It is essential that this government continue to provide leadership, encourage community awareness of the issue and make resources and information available.

I am pleased with the progress made under **"Choices"**, and with the on-going activities of this government in the field. It is my hope that this final report, including the discussion questions and reading list, will help stimulate continued discussion of innovative and creative ways of addressing this important social issue.

Minister Responsible for the
Status of Women

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RECOMMENDATIONS AND PROGRESS

INFORMATION AND EDUCATION

1. **Develop, produce (translate where possible) and distribute information/educational and public awareness materials, pamphlets, posters, handbooks, TV and radio spots. Materials are needed for the general public (awareness); spousal assault victims and offenders; community action groups; and volunteer workers; councils and schools; nurses; social workers; RCMP and courtworkers.**

DEPARTMENTS(S) RESPONSIBLE
Culture and Communications

SUMMARY OF PROGRESS
Culture and Communications has produced a variety of materials on spousal assault. These include posters; buttons; radio programs; television spots; pamphlets; booklets; and the **Spousal Assault Newsletter.** In addition to the production of written materials, the Department also funded the projects of non-governmental agencies, such as the Pond Inlet Players and the Society Against Family Abuse and translated video resources into native languages. A resource catalogue and an extensive mailing list were developed. The mailing list was used to distribute the **Spousal Assault Newsletter** to a broad segment of the population. During the three years, the Department also participated in interagency activities such as the Family Violence Conference held in March 1988 and the Ministerial Committee on Spousal Assault.

2. **Provide information (posters, pamphlets) on rights of victims of spousal assault and assistance available to them. Be aware of current community resources available (such as safe shelter).**

DEPARTMENT(S) RESPONSIBLE
Women's Secretariat, GNWT Public Libraries

SUMMARY OF PROGRESS
The Women's Secretariat has gathered and distributed information to various communities on a variety of issues. These include information on available films and videos, training manuals, batterers' programs, shelters and crisis centres, the cycle of violence, the dynamics of violence,

characteristics of abused women and batterers as well as published research reports and findings. The Public Libraries contain a variety of information and communities can access materials through their local library. Women's Secretariat also published and widely distributed the First and Second Annual Reports of **"Choices"**.

4. **Ensure that the published materials collected by the Task Force are catalogued and available through the library system.**

DEPARTMENT(S) RESPONSIBLE
Women's Secretariat, GNWT Public Libraries

SUMMARY OF PROGRESS
The Women's Secretariat, in co-operation with the Public Library System, distributed the "Task Force Report on Spousal Assault" and **"Choices"** to community groups and libraries in the N.W.T. As per #3 above, distribution of other materials continues.

5. **Develop alcohol and drug awareness curriculum and family life curriculum for schools.**

DEPARTMENT(S) RESPONSIBLE
Health, Education

SUMMARY OF PROGRESS
The School Health Program, which includes Alcohol and Drug Awareness and Family Life components, is now delivered from kindergarten through grade 9. The Alberta High School Health Program Career and Life Management component is available in high schools and is a requirement for graduation.

In addition, a handbook and procedures for reporting suspected child abuse were developed for teachers.

Workshops to assist teachers in the use of the Family Life Unit have been delivered by the Family Life consultants from the Department of Health.

MEDICAL ATTENTION

6. **That apparent victims of spousal assault be given immediate medical attention.**

DEPARTMENT(S) RESPONSIBLE
Health and Welfare Canada, Social Services

SUMMARY OF PROGRESS
Interagency Referral Protocols have been developed and implemented. Pamphlets, posters and newsletters have been distributed to nursing stations, hospitals, health centres and other relevant agencies. As of April 1, 1988, responsibility for this item was transferred to GNWT Department of Health.

ACCESS TO OTHER ASSISTANCE

7. **Lead the development of a coordinated interagency referral system, and include drug and alcohol workers.**

8. **Participate in an interagency approach to assist victims of spousal assault.**

DEPARTMENT(S) RESPONSIBLE
Social Services, Health and Welfare Canada, RCMP, Health

SUMMARY OF PROGRESS
Protocols for interagency cooperation on the management of spousal assault cases have been developed and implemented. Implementation varies from community to community depending on the resources available. The responsibility for Health and Welfare Canada was transferred to GNWT Department of Health in April 1988.

9. **Review requirements for social assistance and exercise flexibility and leniency for victims and families in transition. Provide social assistance for victims and families in transition.**

DEPARTMENT(S) RESPONSIBLE
Social Services

SUMMARY OF PROGRESS
Regulations have been revised to allow social workers to provide automatic assistance to victims of violence. Per diem rates for financial assistance for shelters have been established and are used in various shelters throughout the N.W.T.

10. **Fund transportation costs of victims to shelters and day care costs, where necessary.**

DEPARTMENT(S) RESPONSIBLE
Social Services

SUMMARY OF PROGRESS
Transportation is provided to victims of spousal assault if temporary relocation is required. Day care costs are funded if women are in the workforce, going to school, involved in counselling treatment or require child care for mental health reasons.

SHELTER AND PROTECTION

11. **Assist victims in finding immediate safe shelter where needed.**

DEPARTMENT(S) RESPONSIBLE
RCMP

SUMMARY OF PROGRESS
RCMP has set policy requiring RCMP officers to assist victims of violence to find safe shelter. This policy is carried out under the direction of the Officer in Charge, Criminal Investigations Branch.

12. **Give spousal assault victims priority for housing and day care, where required.**

DEPARTMENT(S) RESPONSIBLE
Social Services, N.W.T. Housing Corporation

SUMMARY OF PROGRESS
Local Housing Authorities and Associations work with Social Services to provide housing for victim of violence. However, the availability of housing units remains lower than the demand and hence it is not always possible to provide housing when it is needed.

As well, Housing Authorities and Associations have been directed by the NWT Housing Corporation to alter all lease agreements and forms to ensure that both signatures of a couple are included when appropriate. Both signatures are also required for applications to the Homeownership Assistance Program. NWT Housing Corporation has released a three bedroom detached housing unit for use as second stage housing in Hay River.

13. **Provide alternatives for shelter for spousal assault victims; fund new pilot shelters in communities demonstrating commitment, using existing buildings where possible.**

DEPARTMENT(S) RESPONSIBLE
Social Services

SUMMARY OF PROGRESS

Community crisis shelters have been established in Fort Smith, Hay River, Iqaluit, Yellowknife, Cambridge Bay, Spence Bay, Rankin Inlet and Tuktoyaktuk. Safe houses also operate in several communities on a less formal basis. Training and support initiatives for shelter staff and members of community groups have been undertaken. These have included funding to attend the Family Violence Conference in March 1988 in Yellowknife, provision of training workshops, and support of "staff exchanges" between shelters.

14. **Fund the operating costs of existing shelters. (Sappujjijit Friendship Centre in Rankin Inlet, Katimavik Centre in Cambridge Bay, YWCA in Yellowknife and the Crisis Centre in Fort Smith).**

DEPARTMENT(S) RESPONSIBLE

Social Services

SUMMARY OF PROGRESS

The Department continues to fund the existing shelters and four additional ones have been developed (as per #13 above) over the past three years. In 1987/88, $992,620 was spent for shelters. In 1988/1989 $1,264,300 was spent for shelters. As well, the Department funded one second stage housing unit in Hay River. The Family Violence Prevention Program is now in the base budget of the Department of Social Services and will continue to fund shelters.

15. **Continue to provide physical protection to victims, consider all complaints as serious and advise victims that batterers should be prosecuted.**

DEPARTMENT(S) RESPONSIBLE

RCMP

SUMMARY OF PROGRESS

RCMP are governed by a policy directive to consider all complaints as serious and to advise victims to press charges. Officers are required to provide protection for the victim. The policy is carried out under the direction of the Officer In Charge, Criminal Investigations Branch.

COUNSELLING

16. **Provide for professional Family Life Education Consultants to support victims of spousal assault, their families and offenders through training and advice to nurses, social**

workers, court workers, RCMP, community groups, volunteer lay counsellors, and schools.

DEPARTMENT(S) RESPONSIBLE
Health (Family Life Education)

SUMMARY OF PROGRESS
The Family Life Education Program has, over the life of the Action Plan, conducted workshops and presentations with a number of groups across the NWT. These include community groups, nurses, teachers, social workers, youth groups, students and the general public. Presentations have also been made to the March 1988 Family Violence Conference and Inuit Women's Association. Topics covered include Sexuality, Family Violence, AIDS and Child Sexual Abuse Prevention. The method used to deliver workshops is the Popular Education Model which encourages and allows for workshop members to actively participate; this method has been well received by the communities. In addition to workshops on specific topics, facilitator training workshops have been delivered. In-service training has been used to upgrade the knowledge and skills of the program staff. Program staff also participated in the planning of the Child Sexual Abuse Conference in January 1989.

17. **Provide for crisis lines in conjunction with NorthwesTel on a regional community basis. Fund space, telephone installation, rental and long distance charges. (Line to be operated by trained volunteers).**

DEPARTMENT(S) RESPONSIBLE
Social Services, Health

SUMMARY OF PROGRESS
Some shelters provide emergency phone service; communities can call collect. No other formal crisis lines have been established.

18. **Extend counselling to victims provided by professionals by telephone.**

DEPARTMENT(S) RESPONSIBLE
Social Services, Health

SUMMARY OF PROGRESS
Information about available services is available on 24 hour lines operated by Social Services in each region. Emergency support and advice to victims in crisis can be provided if they contact the shelters. No formalized counselling is available via phone to victims.

DIRECTION AND ASSISTANCE TO COMMUNITY AGENCIES

19. **Foster development of community action groups, volunteers to support victims and development of lay counsellors involving respected elders of communities.**

DEPARTMENT(S) RESPONSIBLE
Social Services

SUMMARY OF PROGRESS
A variety of projects have been funded; these include conferences, workshops, training sessions, public awareness meetings, establishment of support networks and safe homes. Community resources/initiatives funded on an annual basis include NWT Family Counselling (Yellowknife), Family Counselling Services (Inuvik), Family Life Program (Fort Providence) and Baker Lake Hospice Society (Baker Lake).

TREATMENT AND ASSISTANCE FOR BATTERERS

20. **Review the legal aid plan to permit legal aid defence counsel to assist clients (batterers) get treatment and counselling.**

DEPARTMENT(S) RESPONSIBLE
Justice

SUMMARY OF PROGRESS
Treatment programs are available in Inuvik and Yellowknife. Legal aid defense counsel are encouraged to refer batterers to these programs for treatment.

21. **Assess needs of convicted batterers for rehabilitation. Provide anger control therapy and counselling services. Consider anger control therapy as a sentencing option.**

DEPARTMENT(S) RESPONSIBLE
Social Services

SUMMARY OF PROGRESS
Research on rehabilitation needs of convicted batterers is in progress across Canada. The types of treatment offered utilize a variety of models, one of which is anger control therapy. Therapy as a sentencing option is still under discussion.

DIRECTION AND SUPPORT FOR GOVERNMENT AGENTS/SOCIAL WORKERS

22. **Develop departmental policy and procedures for providing services to spousal assault victims and families, ensuring coordination with other agencies involved.**

DEPARTMENT(S) RESPONSIBLE
Social Services

SUMMARY OF PROGRESS
Social Services has developed policy, protocols and procedures for providing service to spousal assault victims for its own workers. Interagency protocols have also been developed.

23. **Clarify social workers' duties and responsibilities under present law, and develop in-service training workshops to prepare workers for spousal assault cases.**

DEPARTMENT(S) RESPONSIBLE
Social Services

SUMMARY OF PROGRESS
Social Services offers in-service crisis management courses to social workers. Social workers are encouraged to work with other agencies in the management of spousal assault cases via protocols.

24. **Enhance the Social Worker Program at Thebacha College to include training in family violence cases.**

DEPARTMENT(S) RESPONSIBLE
Education, Social Services, Health

SUMMARY OF PROGRESS
The Social Worker Program is a two year program which trains social workers on the impact of family violence. There are three courses which deal specifically with the issue. They are Social Problems, Family Dynamics and Child Welfare. Areas discussed include alcohol abuse, spousal assault and child abuse. During this time, practicums may be taken in a shelter. The family violence aspects are included in both the Social Service Program at Thebacha Campus and the Human Services Program at the Nunatta Campus.

25. **Give priority to native social workers who apply for education leave or assistance to improve their qualifications.**

DEPARTMENT(S) RESPONSIBLE
Education

SUMMARY OF PROGRESS

Priority is given to native students both under the Affirmative Action Policy, and by the Interdepartmental Staff Development Committee. This Committee reviews all requests for education leave and makes recommendations to the Executive.

As of April 1, 1989, there were a total of 16 person years allocated for Social Work training in the In-Service Training Program. A total of eleven (11) native people are currently employed in this program and are enrolled in the Diploma Program with Arctic College. Recruitment is underway for a total of five (5) other positions.

In the Education Leave Program, a total of nine (9) out of forty-one (41) education leave recipients for 1989/90 are native employees entering either diploma or degree programs in Social Work.

MEDICAL CARE PROFESSIONALS

26. **Develop procedures and protocols for the management and documentation of spousal assault cases.**

DEPARTMENT(S) RESPONSIBLE

Health and Welfare (Medical Services), Justice Canada, RCMP, Health

SUMMARY OF PROGRESS

Procedures and protocols have been developed and are in place for interagency referral and documentation of spousal assault cases. The responsibility of Health and Welfare Canada was transferred to GNWT Department of Health as of April 1988.

AGENTS OF THE LAW/JUDGES/PROSECUTORS

27. **That the Commissioner of the NWT and the Federal Minister of Justice consider appointment of women to judicial office and assignment of women to positions as crown prosecutors.**

DEPARTMENT(S) RESPONSIBLE

Justice Canada, Justice

SUMMARY OF PROGRESS
Whenever possible this is being done. In 1988, four(4) of the nine (9) full-time crown prosecutors were women.

28. **When dealing with applications for peace bonds, bail review and sentencing of batterers, note the right of victims to remain in their own homes and communities.**

DEPARTMENT(S) RESPONSIBLE
Justice Canada

SUMMARY OF PROGRESS
The importance of this recommendation has been noted and a policy developed and implemented.

29. **Hold judicial interim release hearings in appropriate spousal assault cases.**

DEPARTMENT(S) RESPONSIBLE
Justice Canada, Justice

SUMMARY OF PROGRESS
Where possible, this is being done.

30. **Consider whether sentences act as a general deterrent to the public or a specific deterrent to the individual.**

DEPARTMENT(S) RESPONSIBLE
Justice Canada, Justice

SUMMARY OF PROGRESS
It has been difficult to determine if sentences act as a deterrent to either the individual or the public.

31. **Allow prosecutors and judges to spend more time in communities.**

DEPARTMENT(S) RESPONSIBLE
Justice Canada

SUMMARY OF PROGRESS
The Department recognizes the importance of spending time in the communities and is exploring ways to achieve this objective. Deputy judges and extra circuits have been added, as allowed within budget limitations.

32. **Ensure that crown prosecutors have been trained for spousal assault cases and that they consult with professionals and the community when determining whether to lay a charge in a spousal assault case and that, where prosecutors have special**

interests and aptitudes, spousal assault cases be assigned to them.

DEPARTMENT(S) RESPONSIBLE
Justice Canada

SUMMARY OF PROGRESS
Specialized training for prosecutors, judges and lawyers is not yet available in the NWT. Resources in some communities are scarce and this makes it difficult to consult with the community in dealing with spousal assault cases. Consultation with professionals is done where such people are available.

33. **Provide training for prosecutors in the NWT.**

DEPARTMENT(S) RESPONSIBLE
Justice Canada

SUMMARY OF PROGRESS
No specialized training has been provided.

COURT WORKERS

34. **Provide for professional or lay advocates to advise victims and provide support during court proceedings.**

DEPARTMENT(S) RESPONSIBLE
Justice

SUMMARY OF PROGRESS
The Court Workers mandate is to provide services to the accused. They have, however, provided referral and information to victims if needed. Funding is now available under the Victims of Crime Act for groups to apply to set up victims' advocate programs.

35. **Provide for court workers to respond to victims' enquiries and consider enhancing duties of courtworkers to include acting as an intermediary and advocate for victims.**

DEPARTMENT(S) RESPONSIBLE
Justice

SUMMARY OF PROGRESS
The court workers will provide information about court procedures to victims of spousal assault as well as referring

them to other agencies or to crown counsel depending on the need.

LEGISLATIVE INITIATIVES

36. **Review legislation and prepare a draft ordinance on spousal assault.**

DEPARTMENT(S)RESPONSIBLE
Justice

SUMMARY OF PROGRESS
Assault is an offence under the Federal Criminal Code and not within the jurisdiction of the G.N.W.T. Justice has begun an initiative on Family Law Reform and some issues that relate to spousal assault victims will be examined.

37. **Review and consider amending the Mental Health Ordinance (through consultation) to permit batterers with suspected psychological problems to be committed for mental examination.**

DEPARTMENT(S) RESPONSIBLE
Justice, Health

SUMMARY OF PROGRESS
The Act was reviewed and no changes were made.

POLICING ISSUES

38. **That the Commission of the RCMP consider assignment of women to "G" division positions in the RCMP.**

DEPARTMENT(S) RESPONSIBLE
RCMP

SUMMARY OF PROGRESS
There have been several women assigned to "G" Division. In 1988/89 there were 14 women serving in various detachments including Hay River, Holman Island, Inuvik, Tuktoyaktuk and Yellowknife. Of these, four women officers serve as Native Special Constables in Fort Liard, Fort Simpson, Hay River and Fort Resolution.

39. **Explore diversion for batterers who might otherwise be prosecuted in courts where applicable.**

40. **Review the policy allowing RCMP to lay charges in spousal assault cases and continue to lay charges in as many cases as possible.**

DEPARTMENT(S) RESPONSIBLE
RCMP

SUMMARY OF PROGRESS
Diversion for batterers has only been explored in a preliminary manner and no diversion programs exist. Policy requires the RCMP to lay charges in spousal assault cases and officers are expected to follow policy.

41. **Consult with other professionals in the community in spousal assault cases.**

DEPARTMENT(S) RESPONSIBLE
RCMP

SUMMARY OF PROGRESS
The RCMP support and participate in the interagency referral system whenever possible. A directory of inter-agency resources by community has been prepared for use by officers. It has also been distributed to relevant government departments and community groups.

42. **Provide special training to recruits and In-Service Training on spousal assault investigation and case preparation.**

DEPARTMENT(S) RESPONSIBLE
RCMP

SUMMARY OF PROGRESS
Training in domestic disputes/violence has been ongoing since the mid-seventies in Regina and Ottawa. In-service training for NWT officers is provided whenever possible.

43. **Take statements from household members witnessing spousal assault.**

DEPARTMENT(S) RESPONSIBLE
RCMP

SUMMARY OF PROGRESS
Household statements are included as part of the investigation of complaints of assault.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Wife abuse continues to be an issue of growing concern in the NWT and across Canada. Shelters for abused women began almost twenty years ago and today still offer the original services: shelter, safety, information, referrals, and emotional support as women struggle to gain control of their lives again. Much more is known today about wife abuse and people are starting to ask some fundamental questions about the ways it is being addressed. Some of these questions are listed here in the hope of encouraging discussion of innovative community solutions.

1. Is the general public aware of the needs of battered women?

2. What combination or balance of programs and initiatives, such as shelters, counselling, batterers programs, will effectively address wife assault in the NWT?

3. What community groups can be involved in finding community solutions?

4. How can those involved address the special needs of children from violent families?

5. Should the batterer, rather than the women and children, be removed from the house?

6. What can we all do to ensure that battered women are not "re-victimized" by the institutions and systems they encounter?

7. What can be done by parents and in schools to address this problem?

The Government of the NWT recognizes that it cannot, and indeed should not, provide all the solutions to this problem. Co-operation with community groups is key to the development of truly community based responses. Communities, groups and individuals are encouraged to add their own questions to this list as well as to seek answers. The "Recommended Reading List" included may help to provide some direction and information in the search for answers.

The Women's Secretariat has a mandate to monitor and facilitate progress. We would like to hear about your concerns and innovative ideas. You can reach us at:

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RECOMMENDED READING LIST

"Understanding Wife Assault: A Training Manual for Counsellors and Advocates" by Deborah Sinclair, MSW, CSW, published by:

Ontario Government Bookstore
Publications Services Section
880 Bay Street
Toronto, Ontario
M7A 1N8

"Getting Free: A Handbook for Women In Abusive Relationships" by Ginny Micarthy, published by:

The Seal Press
312 S. Washington
Seattle, Washington
U.S.A. 98104

"Battered But Not Beaten.... Wife Battering in Canada" and "Preventing Wife-Battering: Towards A New Understanding" by Linda MacLeod published by:

Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women
Box 1541 Station B
Ottawa, Ontario
K1P 5R5

"Family Violence in a Patriarchal Culture: A Challenge To Our Way of Living" published by:

The Church Council on Justice and Corrections
507 Bank Street
Ottawa, Ontario
K2P 1Z5

or

Canadian Council on Social Development
Box 3505, Station "C"
Ottawa, Ontario
K1Y 4G1

Information about these and other resources is available from the GNWT Women's Secretariat.

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